

**IN THE CLAIMS:**

Claims 1-22 (Cancelled).

23. (Currently Amended) A method of operating a vacuum packaging appliance to evacuate a container, said vacuum packaging appliance having a lid and a base that must be engaged during operation in order to properly evacuate said container, said method comprising the steps of:

inserting a removable trough into said vacuum packaging appliance including the steps of opening a bay door in said vacuum packaging appliance, sliding said removable trough into a groove found behind said bay door, and closing said bay door, wherein said bay door is part of said base, and said removable trough resides in said base when inserted in said vacuum packaging appliance, said removable trough being engagable with said lid when said lid is in a closed position, said trough arranged to capture at least some of any contaminants evacuated from said container during operation of said vacuum packaging appliance;

coupling an open end of said container with a vacuum source and said trough, thereby forming a vacuum circuit suitable for evacuating said container when said vacuum source is operating;

latching said lid to said base in a manner intended to close said vacuum circuit;

evacuating said container via said vacuum circuit; and

capturing said at least some of any contaminants in said removable trough.

24-25 (Cancelled).

26. (Original) A method as recited in claim 23, further comprising: sensing a contaminant level within said removable trough.

27. (Original) A method of operating a vacuum packaging appliance to evacuate a container as recited in claim 26, further comprising: providing a warning feedback to a user when said contaminant level reaches a predefined level.

28. (Original) A method of operating a vacuum packaging appliance to evacuate a container as recited in claim 23, further comprising: removing said removable trough from said vacuum packaging appliance; and cleaning said removable trough.

29-34 (Cancelled).